

that only winning really mattered – to demonstrate how different they were from their modern counterpart. Chapter One then introduces the reader to the site of Olympia and its features, including the Temple and Statue of Zeus, as well as considering what would have been the ancient experience of visiting it; there is also an overview of the excavation history of the site. The second chapter then investigates the origins of the Olympics, surveying the stories the ancient Greeks told about the commencement of the festival before

considering modern theories. The author suggests ‘that the games evolved out of the natural competitiveness of the Greek elite’ (p. 45) as he situates the development of the games in the context of the archaic period and emphasises that only the wealthiest in society would have had sufficient time and money to be competitors. Such ideas are further developed in the third chapter, entitled ‘Sport and society in ancient Greece’, where the emergence of the Greek gymnasium culture and athletic training are discussed alongside the establishment of a circuit of games around Greece, of which the Olympics were the most prestigious. This chapter also addresses the question of why athletes came to compete at Olympia without clothes; the case is made that ‘nudity... [was] adopted for ritual and aesthetic purposes rather than practical and performance-enhancing ones’ (p. 84).

The fourth chapter addresses the Olympic festival itself, considering the timing of the games, the truce that accompanied them and the role of the judges, as well as trying to establish the order of events at the festival and noting the date at which different competitions were introduced (and in some cases discontinued). In the following chapter the ‘sporting’ events themselves are surveyed, and here too is where one may read about the Heraea, the games for girls that were also held at Olympia. Examples of those who were victorious at Olympia are the focus of Chapter Six, where we read that some Olympic champions became ‘heroes’, that is, semi-divine figures in the Greek sense of the word; sceptical modern readers are reminded that in our own day ‘Elvis Presley’s Graceland mansion is a pilgrimage site...[and] In Jamaica, Bob Marley’s status is very close to that of a hero in the ancient Greek sense’ (p. 142).

Chapter Seven deals with more earthly matters, namely politics. We read of the tension between the ideal of Olympia being a place where Greeks could meet as equals and the reality of it being an excellent venue for different Greek cities to express their rivalry with one another. This is a rich chapter which reveals ancient examples of issues that we may associate more with the modern games – the banning of states from competing, and even the cancellation of the games. We also see how the site of Olympia came to be used by different Greek cities, through the creation and display of monuments, as a venue for the expression of inter-state rivalries. ‘Much of the earlier history of the Olympics,’ we read, ‘...was undoubtedly characterized by belligerent rivalry between states, their supporters and their athletes’ (p. 173).

The final chapter notes the difficulties with available sources that make study of the ancient Olympics challenging, before considering the games’ decline through the Hellenistic and Roman eras and then their modern revival in the late nineteenth century. An

appendix discusses the marathon race, and dismisses the idea that it recreates an ancient run. There is also a timeline, noting key dates between 1400 BC and (AD) 1988; this is helpful but feels disconnected from the main text by referring to ‘combat events’ which elsewhere are termed ‘heavy events’, and also by mentioning William Penny Brookes, the organiser of ‘Olympian’ games in London in 1866, despite his name not appearing anywhere else in the book.

Although one could learn about specific topics by reading the relevant chapters individually, it is really as a whole that this book should be read; ideas are developed throughout the book and so its different parts work together to give a sense of the realities of the ancient Olympics. The book’s illustrations help with this; they are chiefly photographs, which occupy either a single or double page and appear regularly throughout the text. One criticism would be that the placement of these illustrations does not always fit well with the text; p. 160, for example, has a picture of a statue of Hera, captioned as ‘the patron goddess of the Heraea’, whilst p. 161 which it faces discusses Olympia as ‘a place where teachers and intellectuals disseminated their ideas’, and often one feels that the pictures belong elsewhere than where they have been placed. More helpful are the endnotes, which point the reader to the ancient source material that has informed the text.

The book gives a clear overview of the ancient Olympics, but also illustrates this with anecdotes that help to bring the past to life; there is, for example, the story of a horse that managed to win the Olympic crown for its owner despite losing its jockey at the start (pp. 109–110), which reveals the insignificance of the actual riders – who were probably slaves – in the equestrian events. The book’s suggestions for further reading remind us that there are many titles available on the ancient Olympics, but this well-written and carefully-researched volume certainly joins the best of them in giving a vivid sense of such a famous festival.

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## Augustine: Confessions Books V – IX

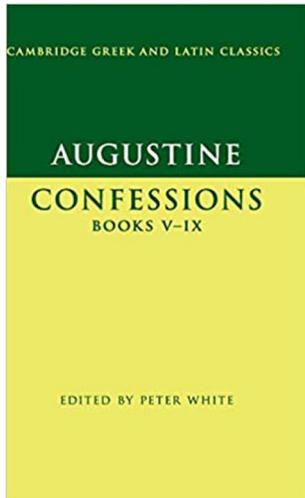
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Maria Bergquist

Merchant Taylors’ School, Northwood

Books V – IX of Augustine’s *Confessions* follow Augustine from Carthage to Rome and then to Milan. This geographical journey is tied up with a journey of intellectual and religious conversions, in which Augustine grapples with ideas of Manichaeism, Neoplatonism, and Christianity. Some of the best-known episodes fall within this volume: Monnica’s abandonment, Ambrose’s silent reading, Alypius’ bloodlust at the games, and Augustine’s crisis in the garden at Milan as he agonises over his conversion to a life of chastity.

White’s introduction situates the reader in this extraordinary text with a succinct discussion of important points of content, context, and style. A section on ‘*Confessions* in the life and literary career of Augustine’ gives a brief sketch of Augustine’s life at



the time of the composition of *Confessions*, before discussing puzzles of the text's purpose and genre. A section on 'The Latinity of *Confessions*' draws attention to the ways in which Augustine's Latin, while strongly influenced by his study and admiration of Cicero, differs from classical Latin, and explores how Augustine adopts the language and rhythms of Scripture in his writing. Following on from this discussion of Augustine's use of biblical style, White discusses the influence of classical rhetorical devices, drawing on Augustine's *On Christian Teaching* for illumina-

tion. A final section examines the book divisions and narrative structure in *Confessions*. What a reader new to *Confessions* may miss from this introduction is a brief overview of the ideas behind some of Augustine's earlier conversions; Manichaeism and Neoplatonism are mentioned only in passing in this introduction. They are, however, introduced briefly in G. Clark's 1995 commentary on Books I – IV.

The text itself is based on that of O'Donnell (*Augustine's Confessions*, Oxford, 1992). It is unusual for a 'Green and Yellow' in sup-

plying no *apparatus criticus*, but there are few textual problems in the work, and these are discussed in the commentary when they appear (for example on the inclusion or omission of *se* at 5.3.4, discussed on p. 88). This approach follows that of Clark's commentary on the preceding four books.

The commentary is aimed at two audiences: students of Classics and students of patristics. White acknowledges 'the possible cost of sometimes supplying one of them with information that the other may not need' (p. ix). The commentary does indeed give information that might seem rather basic to one or other of these audiences – for a classicist, this is particularly felt in some explanations of the language – but, overall, its admirable thoroughness in anticipating confusion over grammatical and theological points renders the text accessible to both sets of readers. Scriptural and literary allusions are identified and explored in further detail at interesting points, for example at 5.8.15, where White assesses the allusion to *Aeneid* 4 in the story of the abandonment of Monnica while also drawing attention to intertexts with *Genesis* and *Aeneid* 9 (p. 104). Philosophical issues are helpfully and concisely clarified, for instance at the discussion of the will which Augustine introduces to the account of his conversion to chastity (8.8.20ff., p. 262ff.).

Like any commentary, the book is limited by its size and its aims and must therefore be selective. White's prudent selections allow this volume to serve as an effective introduction to a text of considerable historical, literary, and philosophical interest.

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